

AUTHORS

New Book Explores Pagan Commitment Ceremonies

By ADAM SWIFT

In the new book, "Passages: Handfasting," the Rev. Kendra Vaughan Hovey travels back to the medieval roots of the pagan commitment ceremony while also giving attention to modern-day wedding concerns like sticking to a budget.

The publishers of the book came to Hovey, the elder high priestess of the First Church of Wicca in Duxbury, last October and asked her if she wanted to write the book, the first in a planned series on pagan rituals and ceremonies.

"They wanted me to write a book on handfasting, which is the pagan commitment ceremony, but they told me I would only have three months to write it," she said.

With the church's busy holiday season coming up, and The Learning Channel filming Hovey's family for a documentary, Hovey at first didn't think she could meet the quick turnaround time and was going to turn down the offer.

"I talked to my husband and he said it would have been crazy not to do it after it was dropped in my lap, so I said okay," Hovey said. "It was a huge challenge, but I had a huge amount of support."

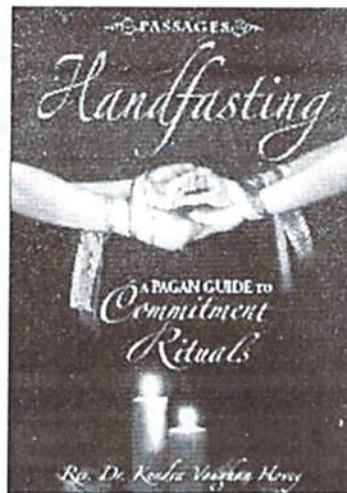
Hovey said the book publisher approached her to write the book because she is one of the few ministers in the pagan community with serious academic credentials. She has a doctorate from the University of Sedona in ministry with a specialty in pastoral counseling.

Hovey is also one of the few Wiccans to have founded a public ministry, publicly incorporating the First Church of Wicca in Duxbury in 2006.

In writing the book on



The Rev. Kendra Vaughan Hovey's new book on pagan commitment ceremonies will be released in December.



and are not always looking for a minister to bind a union," Hovey said. "It's not unusual for two pagans to handfast and not have it legally recognized."

Hovey's book contains information on where to find pagan clergy members who can perform the ceremonies and also gives many ideas for how to put together a handfasting ceremony.

The book provides both practical tips and information about the history of handfasting, the term itself dating back to the Anglo-Saxon word handfaestung.

While the Anglo-Saxon word goes back to medieval days, the pagan tradition dates from pre-Biblical times.

ty in life," said Hovey. "When you come into a faith like Wicca, we have a code of ethics, but it is not necessarily a list of 10 commandments telling you what you need to do."

As more and more people publicly come into the religion, Hovey said there is a need for more qualified priests and priestesses to perform ceremonies like handfasting. While there has always been a large pagan community, Hovey said, there has been a greater willingness for people to practice in the open, and a greater acceptance from the public at large.

In fact, Hovey said, one of the main goals she hopes to accomplish with her book is to foster greater religious tolerance, both for other religions towards Wicca, and for Wicca towards other religions.

"Passages: Handfasting" will be available in the New Age section of all major bookstores this December. Hovey said she will have copies of the book to sign at the annual church craft fair.